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# SPEECH

OF

# HON. JOHN L. ROBINSON, OF INDIANA,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JANUARY 18, 1848.

*In Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, on the Resolutions referring the President's Message to the various Standing Committees.*

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Mr. ROBINSON said, he would claim the indulgence of the committee for a few minutes only, while he called their attention to two or three points that had been made in this debate. He did not expect to follow the poetical gentleman from Georgia, who had just taken his seat, through the windings of his remarks for his hour. There were but one or two topics in the gentleman's speech on which he should touch. One of them was the recent charge made against the Executive for withholding from this House the instructions given to Mr. Slidell, our late Minister to Mexico. A fresh charge against the Executive in reference to this war! And although he had given this subject some little attention, he must say, of all the extraordinary issues, of all the extraordinary objections that had been made in reference to this war, this, it seemed to him, was the most extraordinary, and had the least foundation. He had not examined the precedents in relation to this matter; but the idea that this House had the right to call upon the President of the United States to lay before the world any and all the instructions given to his diplomatic agents pending negotiations, was an idea so preposterous that there was not a man in the land but must see at once that it had no foundation in reason—not one; not a man even who knew how to be a horse-jockey but must treat it as ridiculous. Why, if you have a right to demand that the President make public the instructions to Mr. Slidell, you have a right to call on him for his instructions to Mr. Trist: and if you have that right, you have also the right, in the event of his appointing commissioners to meet commissioners of Mexico at some intermediate place, the very moment they have started, to call upon him for the instructions given them; which instructions may be published here, and, sent on the wings of the wind, may reach Mexico; and our *ultimatum* may be in the hands of the Mexican commissioners before our commissioners may reach there. Any man who knows how to sell a dozen of eggs or a horse, knows how utterly futile it would then render the efforts of our agents to obtain any fair or reasonable terms from Mexico.

A plenipotentiary's instructions are always graduated. He is told, if he cannot get this, take that; here is the least you must accept, but take more if you can get it. But if the minister on the other side is advertised beforehand as to what is the least you will take, does any suppose he will be stupid enough to offer you more? Moreover, in this case the instructions were given to Mr. Slidell *before* the war commenced. He (Mr. R.) apprehended he was instructed to ask much less *then* than our Government ought to be willing to accept *now*, after Mexico has put us to the enormous sacrifice of blood and treasure, which has resulted from the war she wickedly commenced.

But the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. SCHENCK] asked, are you tame and craven enough to vote appropriations for carrying on a war until you know all the purposes that are to be accomplished by it? Why, in the name of common sense, what had the instructions to Mr. Slidell to do with this war? They were never acted on by Mr. Slidell. So far from having anything to do with the commencement of this war, they were not submitted to the Mexican Government at all; for you know Mr. Slidell was rejected; he was not entertained as our minister. His instructions were unknown to the Mexican Government, and whatever they may have been, could have

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formed on their part no motive for the war. They would not even *hear* any proposition of peace. It was a mere pretext; a pretext gotten up on the occasion, for the purpose of justifying some tender-footed gentlemen who come here from war districts to vote against supplies.

He had not examined the historical precedents in reference to this matter of calling for the instructions or the correspondence in the hands of the Executive that may have passed between him and diplomatic confidential agents. By recollection alone, however, he could recur to a few historical facts that would disclose the impropriety of publishing to the world these instructions and correspondence pending negotiations. In 1831 or 1832, pending a difficulty between this Government and France, the correspondence between Mr. Rives, who was so fortunate as to bring it to a conclusion, so far as bringing about a convention went—the correspondence between that distinguished gentleman and the French Government and his own Government was published; published before the French Chambers made the necessary appropriation of twenty-five millions of francs, stipulated in that convention. What was the result? They all recollected that Mr. Rives intimated that he had overreached the French Minister in that negotiation; that he had gotten more than he was authorized to take as his minimum; and the consequence was, that it came well-nigh defeating the payment of the indemnity they had stipulated to pay. It well-nigh brought about a war between this Government and that. It was true, also, that during the administration of the venerable gentleman from Massachusetts, there was a mission got up, and commissioners were started to the Congress of Panama, and, on being inquired of as to their instructions, he declined to communicate them, but referred the House to the Senate, and said he would leave to that body to communicate or not, as they saw fit. That gentleman not only claimed the right, on the part of the Executive, to withhold instructions, but he claimed the right to get up a mission without any authority of law, and then called on Congress to make appropriation for it. They recollected the excitement that grew up on that matter. But it seems to me those who got up this case upon the Executive were in search mainly of a very different affair than these instructions to Slidell. They expected to plow up a mare's nest in reference to the loudly-clamored but false accusation of a collusion between Santa Anna and Mr. Polk in reference to his return to Mexico. Mr. Polk, however, had withheld nothing on this point. He states that the order to Commodore Conner was given without collusion or correspondence with Santa Anna, or any one else.

So much in reference to that point. He passed to another—the pretext made by the gentleman from Georgia, the gentleman from Illinois, [Mr. LINCOLN,] and others who opposed the war, in reference to the march of the army from Corpus Christi to the east bank of the Rio Grande. That movement, it was alleged, was the cause of this war; and the whole opposition to this war, sifted down, centred in that; and that foundation taken from them, their whole superstructure fell to the ground. He should not go into an argument in reference to the boundary line between the United States and Mexico, as to whether the Rio Grande was the true one or not, or whether Mr. Polk ought to have taken the army there or not. He referred the gentleman from Georgia and the gentleman from Illinois to the able speech of the able Senator from Maryland, [Mr. JOHNSON,] delivered the other day in the other wing of this building, wherein he not only ably and clearly demonstrates that the Rio Grande is our proper boundary, but that Mr. Polk gave no just cause of offence in sending the army there. But there was one point in the controversy to which he should call their attention. The gentleman from Illinois [Mr. LINCOLN] intimated, in a set of resolutions submitted by him to this House, that General Taylor, who was then in command of the army, had intimated more than once that the army ought not to have been marched to the Rio Grande, and inquired of Mr. Polk upon this subject. Now, he presumed that that gentleman, and every other gentleman who had read the political history of the country, the history of passing events, knew very well what were the facts. But, at the risk of repeating what gentlemen knew, that those out of this House who should read his remarks, and who might not have access to the documents, might know all about it, he intended, with some degree of deliberation, step by step, to examine this matter.

He did it for the purpose of showing that the Whig party, or at least that portion of it who wished to make General Taylor their candidate for the Presidency, when they held that this movement was the cause of the war, were doing it as a mere pretext, and were hypocritical in making the charge.

What were the facts? The resolutions of annexation passed the Congress of the United States on the 1st of March, 1845, before Mr. Polk came into office. On the 6th of March thereafter, General Almonte, then the Mexican Minister to this country, demanded his passports and went home—alleging as the reason for this, that his Government would regard the act as cause of war. His Government at home went accordingly to issuing their war pronunciamentos, and raised and organized an army with the avowed purpose of reconquering Texas to the Sabine. In view of these events, the Government and people of Texas demanded of this Government protection. Mr. Polk had come into power finding these resolutions of annexation the law of the land. He could do no less, according to his sworn constitutional duty, than afford them the protection they asked. In the month of June, 1845, he selected General Taylor, over the heads of all other officers, his seniors in rank, and made him his confidential officer to command the forces for the protection of Texas. On the 15th June, (to which the gentleman from Georgia referred,) it is true, he told General Taylor his ultimate destination would be the Rio Grande; but on the 8th July the President very materially modified his instructions. Through the Secretary of War, he wrote as follows:

"WAR DEPARTMENT, *July* 8, 1845.

"SIR: This department is informed that Mexico has some military establishments on the east side of the Rio Grande, which are, and for some time have been, in the actual occupancy of her troops. In carrying out the instructions heretofore received, you will be careful to avoid any acts of aggression, unless an actual state of war should exist. The Mexican forces at the posts in their possession, and which have been so, will not be disturbed as long as the relations of peace between the United States and Mexico continue.

WM. L. MARCY.

"Brigadier General Z. TAYLOR."

This was dated July 8. Mr. R. said it was a very material modification of the first letter of instructions given by Mr. Bancroft, the acting Secretary of War. This letter was received and acknowledged by General Taylor before he left New Orleans. On the 30th July, before General Taylor had yet taken his position in Texas, the Secretary of War wrote him a third and still more definite letter as to the objects of his mission. He wished to call the attention of the House to this letter particularly, for he held that upon it the whole argument turned; and he wished to show that the President, in giving his instructions to General Taylor, was discreet, cautious, as much so as a man need be. The Secretary of War wrote thus to General Taylor:

"He [the President] has not the requisite information in regard to the country to enable him to give any positive directions as to the position you ought to take, or the movements which it may be expedient to make. These must be governed by circumstances. While avoiding, as you have been instructed to do, all aggressive measures towards Mexico, as long as the relations of peace exist between that Republic and the United States, you are expected to occupy, protect, and defend the territory of Texas, to the extent that it has been occupied by the people of Texas. The Rio Grande is claimed to be the boundary between the two countries; and up to this boundary you are to extend your protection, only excepting any posts on the eastern side thereof which are in the actual occupancy of Mexican forces, or Mexican settlements over which the Republic of Texas did not exercise jurisdiction at the period of annexation, or shortly before that event. It is expected that, in selecting the establishment for your troops, you will approach as near the boundary line—the Rio Grande—as prudence will dictate. With this view, the President desires that your position for a part of your forces, at least, should be west of the river Nueces."

This was the 30th July, 1845. Several other letters of like tenor and effect were written to General Taylor during that summer and fall. He would read short extracts from one or two of them only. On the 23d of August, of the same year, the President again said to General Taylor, through Secretary Marcy:

"The information hitherto received as to the intentions of Mexico, and the measures she may adopt, does not enable the Administration here to give you more explicit instructions in regard to your movements than those which have already been forwarded to you."

What "instructions" were these? Why, they were "to occupy, protect, and defend the limits of Texas to the extent that it has been occupied by the people of Texas, or to the extent that the Republic of Texas had exercised her jurisdiction." Well, with these two letters of instructions of the 8th of July and the 30th of July

before him, the one telling him that there were Mexican posts on this side of the Rio Grande, and the other that he was only to occupy and defend the territory of Texas, as occupied by the people of Texas, or over which Texas had exercised jurisdiction, what did General Taylor do in the premises? In answering the letter of the 30th of July, he acknowledged its receipt on the 15th of August at Corpus Christi, and said.

"Our last mail (which was saved with difficulty from the wreck of a schooner on the 13th instant) brought your communications of July 28 and 30—the latter enclosing a letter of the Secretary of War of the same date. I am gratified to find that my measures thus far have met the approbation of the Government and General-in-chief, and, particularly, to find that I have but anticipated the wishes of the President in taking up a position west of the Nueces."

He had already got beyond the river Styx, or beyond the Rubicon, as the gentleman over the way said.

Now, on the 4th of October, with his instructions before him, that he was only to occupy and defend Texas so far as Texas had been occupied by its people, or so far as the Government of Texas had exercised jurisdiction, he says, writing from Corpus Christi:

"For these reasons, our position thus far has, I think, been the best possible; but, now that the entire force would soon be concentrated, it may well be a question whether the views of the Government would be carried out by our remaining at this point."

General Taylor was down there on the Rio Grande, two thousand miles from this Capitol; he had facilities for knowing how far Texas had occupied the country or exercised jurisdiction that Mr. Polk had not. Hence, Mr. Polk had given him a *carte blanche*—had allowed him to use his own discretion in the premises. With this power and those instructions before him, he said: "It is with great deference"—he seemed to be aware, said Mr. R., here, that he was treading on ground that properly belonged to the Cabinet and not to the field—"that I make any suggestion on topics which 'may become matter of delicate negotiation; but if our Government, in settling the 'question of boundary, makes the line of the Rio Grande an ultimatum, I cannot 'doubt"—he could not doubt what? That to move an army would bring on war? That it would be an invasion of Mexico?—"I cannot doubt that the settlement 'would be greatly facilitated and hastened by our taking possession at once of one 'or two suitable points on or quite near that river."

There, then, General Taylor gave it as his deliberate opinion, that it would not be an invasion of Mexico; that it would not probably bring on a war between the two countries, but that it would "facilitate and hasten" peace by moving the army to the Rio Grande. Now you talk of making this same General Taylor your candidate for the Presidency. Suppose he had been your President, could you expect him to have acted otherwise as President than he advised the President to act when general of your army?

And further, in the same letter:

"Our strength and state of preparation should be displayed in a manner not to be mistaken. However salutary may be the effect produced upon the border people by our presence here, we are too far from the frontier"—not beyond it, then, (said Mr. R.)—"to impress the Government of Mexico with our readiness to vindicate, by force of arms, if necessary, our title to the country as far as the Rio Grande. The 'army of occupation' will, in a few days, be concentrated at this point, in condition for vigorous and efficient service. Mexico having as yet made no positive declaration of war, or committed any overt act of hostilities, I do not feel at liberty, under my instructions, particularly those of July 8, to make a forward movement to the Rio Grande, without authority from the War Department."

Again, under the same date, he says:

"In case a forward movement should be ordered or authorized, I would recommend the adoption of Point Isabel and Laredo as the best adapted to the purposes of observing the course of the river and covering the frontier settlements of Texas."

He recommended (said Mr. R.) these two points—one at the mouth, the other a good way up the stream—as best adapted to do the very thing he was sent there to do, to wit: to cover and protect the frontier of Texas. So much for that letter, merely adding, by way of a parenthesis, that it has been frequently brought as a complaint against the President, that he sent him there with too small a force. But, bearing on this point, General Taylor added, in a postscript: "Should any auxiliary

force be required, I propose to draw it wholly from Texas. I do not conceive that it will become necessary, under any circumstances, to call for volunteers from the United States." Yet he had ample authority to do so, (said Mr. R.,) as may be seen in the very letter of instructions of the 13th of January, 1846, which finally took him there.

Just here he would pause a moment. This letter was written on the 4th of October. Why was it that the President of the United States did not, in accordance with the suggestions of General Taylor, then give him the order to go to the Rio Grande, where he suggested he ought to go? Why, because this much-abused President, who was charged with precipitating the country into a war with Mexico wantonly, wickedly, was so anxious to avert this calamity. He was about making application, through Mr. Black, our consul at Mexico, for sending a minister there, and asking that Government if they would receive him. Application was made, Mexico agreed to receive one, and early in November Mr. Slidell was sent.

Pending this attempt at negotiation, the President thought it unwise to comply with the suggestions of General Taylor. The General was a little ahead of him. Mr. Slidell was sent there. He arrived at Vera Cruz the 30th November; he reached the capital the 6th December, and was finally rejected, not later than the 24th, he believed the 21st of December. He had recently seen it stated, in a great manifesto, issuing, he believed, from Lexington, that the President, whilst his minister of peace was wending his way to the capital of Mexico, gave the fatal order to the army to march from Corpus Christi to the Rio Grande. So far from that being true, Mr. Slidell reached the city of Mexico on the 6th December, and was rejected on the 21st; and the order for the advance of the army was not given sooner than the 13th January, when all attempts at negotiation had failed. I say all attempts had failed; for in five days after Herrera's rejection of Mr. Slidell, his own Government was overthrown by Paredes, who had revolutionized against him, *because* he (Herrera) had agreed to receive a minister of peace from the United States in the month of October previous. I say this was the ground of that revolution, as was openly avowed by Paredes, and subsequently acknowledged by Herrera, when appointed a commissioner to treat with Mr. Trist. (See his letter, Executive Document No. 1, page 41, of this Congress.) The order was given on the 13th January, after the Mexicans had refused to receive Mr. Slidell at all, to look into his instructions, or talk about making a treaty. Now, let us see the order of the 13th of January. On the 13th January, 1846, the Secretary of War, writing to General Taylor, says:

"SIR: I am directed by the President to instruct you to advance and occupy, with the troops under your command, positions on or near the east bank of the Rio del Norte, as soon as it can conveniently be done with reference to the season and the route by which your movements must be made. From the views heretofore presented to this department,"—[what views? asked Mr. R. The views submitted by General Taylor on the 4th October previous]—"it is presumed Point Isabel would be considered by you an eligible position. This point, or some one near it, and points opposite Matamoros and Mier, and in the vicinity of Laredo, are suggested for your consideration. But you are left to your better knowledge to determine the post or posts which you are to occupy, as well as the question of dividing your forces with the view to occupying two or more positions."

This is the final order for the advance of the army after it was known that Mr. Slidell would not be received; and in that final order the President, through the Secretary of War, only complied with the suggestions of General Taylor, and told him he presumed these points would be considered eligible, because recommended before.

He did not review this matter for the purpose of attaching blame to General Taylor; not at all. He believed he did right; that his suggestions were at the time good. He did it merely for the purpose of showing the hypocrisy of the party who denounced Mr. Polk and lauded General Taylor. On the 13th of January, the Secretary of War distinctly told General Taylor:

"In the positions you may take in carrying out these instructions and other movements that may be made, the use of the Rio del Norte may be very convenient, if not necessary. Should you attempt to exercise the right which the United States have in common with Mexico to the free navigation of this river, it is probable Mexico would interpose resistance. You will not attempt to enforce that right without further instructions."

The Secretary of War here tells General Taylor that if the free navigation of that river is disputed, without further orders from the department, not to undertake to enforce it. But General Taylor, not only without order, but in violation of order,

did undertake to enforce the right to the exclusive navigation of the Rio Grande. He (Mr. R.) would not say this was wrong; he believed General Taylor did right; he mentioned it merely for the purpose of showing that the man whom some of them proposed to make the President of the United States was ahead of the President all the time. He believed if General Jackson had been there, he would not only have gone up to the bank of the Rio Grande, but he would not have waited there for Arista to cross over and attack him; he would have taken the initiative. He believed he would have been justified in so doing, for a man was not bound to wait until he was knocked down before he attempted to defend himself; he might anticipate the blow, and prevent it if possible.

But in order to show beyond all question or cavil what were General Taylor's views as to what would be the *effect* of his movement to the Rio Grande, he (Mr. R.) would quote from still another letter, and one written, too, *after* he had received the order to go. It is his letter dated "Corpus Christi, Texas, February 4, 1846," in which he says:

"In reply to the call of the Secretary for information as to what means, if any, will be required 'to enforce and maintain our common right to navigate' the Rio Grande, I would respectfully state, that until I reach the river and ascertain the condition of things in the frontier States of Mexico, temper of the people, &c., I cannot give any satisfactory answer to the question. I have every reason to believe that the people residing on the river are well disposed towards our Government. *Our advance to the Rio Grande will itself produce a powerful effect*, and it may be that the common navigation of the river will not be disputed. It is very *important* to us, and will be *indispensable* when posts are established higher up, as *must* ultimately be the case."

Here he talks of the "*powerful effect*" his "*advance itself*" would have, and evidently thought that so far from producing a war, it would *avert* that very calamity. The navigation of the river was "important" to us—"indispensable"—as posts "*must*" be established higher up that river.

Mr. R. said he wished now to quote one other letter of General Taylor's, and he would leave this branch of the subject. It is his despatch of April 26, after hostilities had commenced, as follows:

"HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF OCCUPATION,
"*Camp near Matamoros, Texas, April 26, 1846.*

"SIR: I have respectfully to report that General Arista arrived in Matamoros on the 24th instant, and assumed the chief command of the Mexican troops. On the same day he addressed me a communication, conceived in courteous terms, but saying that he considered hostilities commenced, and should prosecute them. A translation of his note, and copy of my reply, will be transmitted the moment they can be prepared. I despatch this by an express which is now waiting. I regret to report that a party of dragoons, sent out by me on the 24th instant, to watch the course of the river above on this bank, became engaged with a very large force of the enemy, and after a short affair, in which some sixteen were killed and wounded, appear to have been surrounded and compelled to surrender. Not one of the party has returned, except a wounded man sent in this morning by the Mexican commander, so that I cannot report with confidence the particulars of the engagement, or the fate of the officers, except that Captain Hardee was known to be a prisoner and unhurt. Captain Thornton, and Lieutenants Mason and Kane, were the other officers. The party was sixty-three strong.

"Hostilities may now be considered as commenced, and I have this day deemed it necessary to call upon the Governor of Texas for four regiments of volunteers, two to be mounted, and two to serve as foot. As some delay must occur in collecting these troops, I have also desired the Governor of Louisiana to send out four regiments of infantry as soon as practicable. This will constitute an auxiliary force of nearly five thousand men, which will be required to prosecute the war with energy, and carry it, *as it should be, into the enemy's country*. I trust the department will approve my course in this matter, and will give the necessary orders to the staff departments for the supply of this large additional force.

"If a law could be passed, authorizing the President to raise volunteers for twelve months, it would be of the *greatest importance* for a service so remote from support as this.

"I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
Z. TAYLOR,
"*Brevet Brig. Gen. U. S. A., commanding.*

"The ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE ARMY, *Washington, D. C.*"

Mr. R. said he had quoted this letter for two purposes: First, to show that General Taylor, while on the bank of the Rio Grande, opposite Matamoros, considered himself *still in Texas*. He so dates his letter—distinctly "TEXAS." Second, to show, that inasmuch as hostilities were then commenced by Mexico, the war should be prosecuted with "*energy*," and carried into the "ENEMY'S COUNTRY." Though then where his affected votaries and advocates for the Presidency now declare was already in the "enemy's country," he did not so think, he did not so speak; but he was in favor of getting over there without delay.

Mr. R. said he might here pause again, and ask the country what they thought of the consistency, the political honesty, of a class of politicians whose whole artillery was levelled at Mr. Polk, because he had, in accordance with General Taylor's own suggestions, ordered him to go where he wanted to go—where he expressed so strongly the opinion he could produce such a "powerful" and "salutary" effect by going,—yet, at the same time, advocate this General's claims for the Presidency, for and in consideration of the identical acts which they declare are sufficient to authorize the impeachment of Mr. Polk. Such a course is, however, characteristic of them throughout their whole history. It is worthy of them. It appears to be the last shot in their locker. They have been struggling for power ever since I recollect, and long before; yet they have succeeded in securing but one single Congress in about twenty years—that which came into power in 1841,—and we all know what was the end and fate of that. When they attempted to put their principles into practice, they at once became so odious that they were swept out of power by an overwhelming torrent of indignation. Since then, they have sunk the old issues; they stand upon them no longer; they are now attempting to get into power by taking sides against their own country when it is engaged in a foreign war. Who doubts the issue, let them rally under what leader they may?

There was one other pretext to which he wished to turn the attention of the committee, in reference to the commencement of this war. It had frequently been stated, here and elsewhere, that the Congress of the United States were in session at the time this order was given, and were wholly unapprized of it; that they were taken by surprise. Let them see how much truth there was in that statement. On the 1st December, 1845, some time before this order was given, and five months before the war commenced, the President of the United States, in his annual message, told Congress:

"The moment the terms of annexation offered by the United States were accepted by Texas, the latter became so far a part of our own country as to make it our duty to afford such protection and defence. I therefore deemed it proper, as a precautionary measure, to order a strong squadron to the coast of Mexico, and to concentrate an efficient military force on the western frontier of Texas. Our army was ordered to take position in the country between the Nueces and the Del Norte, and to repel any invasion of the Texan territory which might be attempted by the Mexican forces. Our squadron in the Gulf was ordered to coöperate with the army."

Now, here, in his annual message in December, 1845, the President distinctly told Congress that he had ordered the army to take a position between the two rivers, and repel any invasion of the Texan territory. But still more. Mr. Secretary Marcy, in his report of the same date, said:

"The ready acceptance on the part of Texas of the terms of annexation proffered by this Government excited the ill-will of the Government of Mexico. That Republic menaced the immediate commencement of hostilities against the United States, and set on foot, as it was said, extensive preparations to invade and subjugate Texas. Pursuant to your directions, an army of occupation was assembled in that State, and Brigadier General Taylor assigned to the command of it. He was instructed to repel Mexican aggressions, and protect the country from Indian invasions; to regard the Rio del Norte as its western boundary; and to select a position for his forces with reference to this frontier; but to leave unmolested Mexican settlements, and also military posts, should there be any such posts on the east bank of that river, which were in the occupation of Mexican forces previously to the period when Texas assented to the terms of annexation."

Here they found that the Secretary of War, in his annual report in December, 1845, reasserted the fact that General Taylor was sent between these rivers and ordered to protect Texan territory up to the Rio del Norte. Yet you allege (said Mr. R.) that in the spring of 1846 you were taken all by surprise.

Still more, they found in the letter of the commanding general, (General Scott,) accompanying the President's message of this date, the following:

"The movements of troops in the direction of Texas have been numerous. There are now in that country detachments from the four regiments of artillery, the whole of the 2d dragoons, the 3d, 4th, 5th, 7th and 8th regiments of infantry, which (about 4,000 men) compose the army of occupation, under the Brevet Brigadier General Taylor, an officer of high merit. What detachments he may have made from Corpus Christi, or what provisional posts occupied, under the instructions of the War Department, time has not yet permitted us to learn. But from his known character, that of his general staff, commanders of corps, officers and men, there is no doubt the army of occupation will be more than sufficient for any defensive exigency likely to occur in that quarter."

They saw (said Mr. R.) in all these annual reports, in reference to this movement, that Congress was fully apprized of it. It was known what General Taylor was doing there, where he was, how far his instructions went. With what grace, then, (he asked,) can you come before the country in

1846, in the month of May, and tell them you were taken by surprise? that you had never read the documents laid on your tables for the very purpose of giving information on this subject?

General Taylor, notwithstanding he was ordered to take up his line of march as early as January, did not move from Corpus Christi until the 11th March, 1846. With the army he arrived on the banks of the Rio Grande on the 28th of that month. Now, if Mr. Clay's allegation had anything in it in the world—if it had any foundation, they saw how far he had missed the mark; that was to say, if the order to General Taylor to go the Rio Grande, or his actual march to that river had any influence in preventing the reception of Mr. Slidell, he (Mr. Clay) was sixty days wide of the mark; because, notwithstanding the order was given the 13th January, he did not commence his march until the 11th of March, and did not arrive at the Rio Grande until the 28th of that month. On the 12th April, General Ampudia ordered General Taylor to withdraw. On the 24th, General Arista notified General Taylor that hostilities had commenced; and on that day Ampudia crossed over the river, and the attack was made on Thornton's command. Here, then, the first gun was fired, the first blood was spilt, by order of Ampudia; not by order of Mr. Polk or of General Taylor.

He would not pursue this subject further. Suffice it to say, it now reached Washington that our army down there was surrounded; that it had been attacked; a division of it had been cut off. Congress moved promptly, and passed a war-bill; they placed at the command of President Polk ten millions of dollars, fifty thousand volunteers, the army and navy and militia, and told him to prosecute this war to a speedy termination.

Now, he asked those who were here and voted for this war-bill then, with what grace they could now turn round and declare that Mr. Polk was the author of this war? Why did they not tell him to bring back our army within our rightful limits, our proper jurisdiction? They had gone too far. For the purpose, however, of bringing reproach upon a Democratic Administration, of obtaining a pretence wherewith to attack the Democracy, they were ready to acknowledge that they voted a lie.

They were ready to stultify themselves, too, by telling the country they knew nothing of what was in the President's annual message and accompanying documents, laid on their tables five months before. They were ready to calumniate the very acts of their own favorite chieftain, (General Taylor.) And in relation to boundary, they repudiate the established and hitherto acknowledged geography of the country, its political history, and even trample under foot the authority of their own leaders, most of whom have already acknowledged the Rio Grande to be the true boundary. They do more still; they assign as a cause of this war, what Mexico herself has never assigned: she says she is fighting about Texas—Texas to the Sabine, not to the Nueces.

Congress had now been in session seven weeks; this was the seventh week of the session. So far as this House is concerned, those of us on this side of the House (said Mr. R.) are utterly powerless in respect to the control or management of business. We can do nothing. Our votes, however, have shown that we have attempted to further the public business—that we have at least not attempted to retard it. We have voted, day after day, to refer the President's message, that the standing committees of the House might take it, parcel it out, and bring bills forward in accordance with or against its recommendations, as they see fit; in short, that we might go to work. The Opposition, however, who had the power, had refused this, and the message was not yet referred. You told the country, (continued Mr. R.,) that if you got the power, you would stop this war; that it is a wicked, unconstitutional one; that the Democratic party ought to be overthrown, and you put in power. Well, so far as this House is concerned, you are in power. What have you done? Have you come forward with a single tangible proposition? Not one. On the contrary, some of you have voted one day that the troops ought to be withdrawn, that the war was "unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President of the United States;" yet another portion of you refuse to take this stand. We ask you to come forward, in obedience, if you please, to the mandate of Mr. Clay, and declare what you think ought to be the objects of this war. We do not deny you the right to make this declaration; whether the President is bound to obey it, is another question. Come forward—declare what is your object. If you go for stopping the war, for bringing back our troops, say so. The result cannot be more humiliating to the pride and glory of the country than it will be to sit still and do nothing. You are bound, according to your promises, to do something, and to do it quickly. As long as you sit here refusing supplies and voting that the war was "unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President," whatever may be your *motives* for such a vote, its *effect* is to afford "aid and comfort" to the enemy.

The gentleman from Illinois [Mr. LINCOLN] said this was the first time he had ever ventured to make such a declaration. That was a very remarkable statement. He had never ventured to tell the people of Springfield district, Illinois, when electioneering for his seat, that the war was unnecessary and unconstitutional; but after he got here he could venture to declare it! How many gentlemen were in a like predicament, who had gotten here without committing themselves on this question, perhaps the subsequent events of the session would delare. The country, however, looked to them to take their position. You must do one of three things, said Mr. R. You must bring your army to the Nueces, where you say the line is; you must take a line in advance of that; or you must go on and prosecute the war, according to the suggestion of the President of the United States. Which course you will take you ought to declare, and declare quickly. If our soldiers in Mexico are to be withdrawn, and no more supplies are to be granted, it ought to be known as quickly as possible, in order that the Executive may conform to the emergencies of the question. If it is to be done, instead of sitting here day by day and making charges against the President, you should come out and declare it boldly before the country, and acknowledge our disgrace in the face of the civilized world.

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